

LYFORD STATION & LYFORD HOUSE - WHERE WERE THEY?

By Robert L. Harrison

Back in 1873, when the Tiburon Peninsula was primarily pastureland, the North Pacific Coast (NPC) railroad began construction of a new rail line from Sausalito across Richardson's Bay to Strawberry Point and on to Corte Madera, Fairfax, West Marin and Duncan Mills. Lyford's station was built on land owned by Hilarita Reed who had inherited parts of original Rancho Corte Madera del Presidio. Now married to Dr. Benjamin Lyford, she sold NPC the right-of-way in exchange for free passenger and freight service to San Francisco for their family as well as the milk and cheese products from their new dairy at Strawberry Point.

NPC's narrow-gauge tracks ran north from Sausalito then across Richardson's Bay from Pine Point on a 4,000-foot long wood trestle to the tip of Strawberry and followed a route along the east Strawberry shore. The line then passed west of the Strawberry Recreation Center onto Richardson Drive and over today's Belvedere Drive on a 60-foot high trestle. From there, it climbed north to Bird Nest Court, topping at Collins Summit and over Alto Hill.

The new Eagle Dairy, located what is now the site of Harbor Point Tennis Club, was a model of progressive health and sanitation practices. All the buildings, fences and railroad structures were painted white and the dairy cows treated with "great kindness". In 1876, the Lyford's built a stylish Victorian house facing San Francisco and moved to Marin.

From 1875 to 1884, rail service to Lyford's Station was considered first-rate. In addition to regular trains that stopped at all stations,

there was an 8:45 a.m. express train from San Rafael and a 3:20 p.m. express from San Francisco stopping at Lyford's, Ross and San Anselmo Junction. In 1884, NPC rail service came to an end as the result of a new rail route north from Sausalito across the Mill Valley wet-lands and through the Alto tunnel to Corte Madera. Dr. Lyford sued NPC for reneging on their agreement but lost the case. Eagle Dairy survived until 1928, using horse carts to deliver their dairy products to Reed's Station on the nearby Tiburon rail line connected by ferry service to San Francisco.

The Lyford property deteriorated and in 1945 it was sold in to the Marin Land Company. By the mid 1950s plans for Harbor Point Beach Club were underway and only the Victorian Lyford House remained. In December 1957, it was barged across the bay to become the home of the Marin Audubon Society on Tiburon Boulevard (now Greenwood Beach Road.) Today, there is no evidence of the original home site, Lyford Station or the railroad that for ten years connected San Francisco to the Tiburon Peninsula and the rest of Marin County.

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1. Looking west over part of Sausalito towards Mt. Tam. In the upper center is the 4,000 foot trestle between Pine Point and Strawberry Point across Richardson's Bay, circa 1882.

2. The Eagle Dairy Ranch on Strawberry circa 1888; the original setting of the Lyford House with the NPC railroad tracks curving around the house and barn. In the distance is Belvedere on the left with sailing ships off Sausalito on the right.

RAILROAD & FERRY
DEPOT MUSEUM

CHINA CABIN

OLD ST. HILARY'S

ART & GARDEN
CENTER

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